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## Most effective treatment for obesity unsupported

**Tuesday 23 October 2018**

Bariatric surgery is not being given the support it needs to have a more meaningful impact, despite being the most effective treatment for weight loss, according to Mr Ahmad Aly, General Surgeon and Specialist Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeon at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne.

Dr Aly, who is also a board member of the Australian and New Zealand Metabolic and Obesity Surgery Society also said that obesity affects over 63 per cent of the Australian population, and is driving diabetes, cancer, heart disease and illness in every bodily system at rates soon to be unsustainable.

“Obesity accounts for one in six hospital days and one in eight admissions and has direct community costs of \$8 billion per year and up to \$52 billion in indirect costs and productivity loss. It is slowly killing us.

“Currently, bariatric surgery is the most effective treatment demonstrated to achieve sustainable weight loss and improvement in associated comorbidities as well as reducing the risk of premature death, but only 1-2 per cent of eligible patients in Australia undergo this surgery, mostly in the private sector. Specialist obesity treatment services in our public health system are scarce. Bariatric surgery in particular is almost non-existent,” he said.

Dr Aly said that despite its proven effectiveness only four per cent of all bariatric surgery in this country is publicly funded due to a lack of services in public hospitals, and despite committed and willing health care professionals ready and available to deliver treatment, governance barriers and reluctance continue to block service delivery.

“This lack of access in the public system is at once a shameful indictment on health care equity and a breathtaking lack of insight into the health care needs of Australia.

“This situation demands urgent and direct action from policy makers at government and hospital level. Access to this life transforming surgery must not be for the well to do alone,” he said.

Mr Aly will be presenting *The role of bariatric surgery in the obesity epidemic* at this year’s ACT Annual Scientific Meeting on Saturday 27 October. The annual event, centred on the role of surgeons in health advocacy, will include a number of presentations from both national and international speakers and will attract more than 100 Fellows, Trainees, and International Medical Graduates.

Joining delegates this year will be ACT Minister for Health Meegan Fitzharris who will share her views on how surgeons can meaningfully progress improvements in healthcare, and better collaboration between administrators and clinicians.

Sponsors include (Gold) Medtronic, and (Silver) Applied Medical, Bank of Queensland, Getinge, KCI Medical, MDA National and Sanofi.

Hosted by the ACT branch of RACS, this event will be held at the Australian National University Medical School in Garran.

[Download the program](#)

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RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.  
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